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The Call of the Passing Race

To My Friend:

Our people wish you well,
You have an Indian heart.
What you to others tell,
Will live when we depart.

—*Sam Cut Grass.*

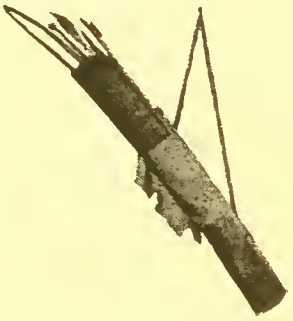
By
Otto T.
Johnsone

The Call of the Passing Race

In Verse and Prose

...By...

OTTO T. JOHNSONE



With Illustrations by the Author

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To the Memory of

My Mother, Sister, and Brother.

PREFACE.

The Redman was always an interesting character to me, with his wonderful imagination. He seemed to convey something further than the mere fact that he was an Indian. His silence ofttimes tells more than his tongue, and when I was taken behind this taciturnity, I found in him character and sentiment that many of us do not believe exists.

In my study of the Indian I tried to reach the man that is in him, which we never allow ourselves to see, and in my effort to portray him without his tomahawk in this booklet, I trust you will find him just as interesting.

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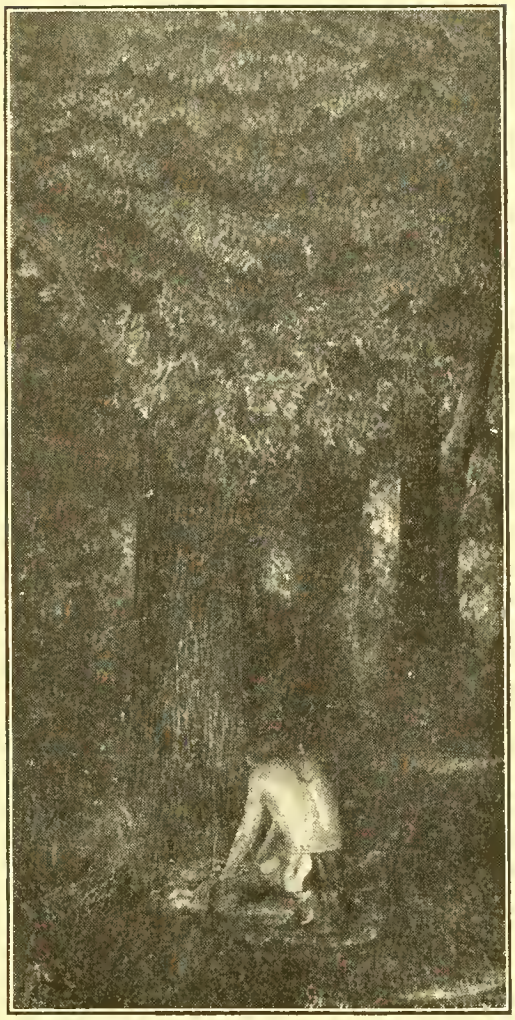


PEACE.

Peace unto men! Now, all rejoice,
And make our Master one;
Then tell the world, with mighty voice,
The will of Man is done.

HONOR.

(*The words of a son to his father.*)

Father, you gave me life, and I have guided that life to be worthy of your giving.

I am your Chief! Now you come before me, guilty of a crime that means death.

I will give you your life; I owe it to you, for you gave me mine. Now my debt is paid.

Hereafter, man is man.

FRIENDSHIP.

You say you are a friend to my people. Then let our people see your heart, for that alone can prove friendship. The tongue makes friends that easily part.

THE SQUAW'S SACRIFICE.

Amid the pines, at break of day,
A guard I stood to dawn,
With bow in hand, but not to slay—
Peace in my heart this morn.

Soon th' signal smoke to me will tell,
Here on the bluff above,
That Fawn is waiting in the dell
For my message of love.

For I dare not tread her people's land—
My cause would come to grief—
But, with this arrow in my hand,
I can defy their Chief.

The signal! Now, my friend, fly there
On where the smoke ascends,
And bear the message through the air
Of that my tongue intends.

The arrow takes its flight to-day
To ease an anxious heart;
Would that I could the distance slay
That now keeps us apart.

As if in answer, a bird flew by
So close it brush'd my bow;
And, like my arrow, on did fly
There to the quiet below.

I envied so that bird its flight,
As I stood longing there,
And saw it pass away from sight,
This spirit of the air.

Then down the path that led to home
I went, with spirit free,
Among my silent friends to roam,
That Nature gave to me.

Until the passing stream I met,
That flows through both our lands.
Her answer it will bring, though wet,
To dry upon the sands.

And then, with eager hand, I took
A feather from my hair,
And cast it in the running brook,
To try the waters there.

I watch'd it float on down the stream:
With it my thoughts did go—
When I was startled from my dream,
And thought it was a foe.

I turned, in haste, to meet it fair—
A deer then sprang in view,
And stood there sniffing of the air,
As deer so often do.

My hand then sought the ready bow,
But stay'd upon the string;
To be a friend this day, not foe,
To every living thing.

At last a chip of birch I saw,
And snatch'd it from the tide;
It bore the only word of law
That would make Fawn my bride.

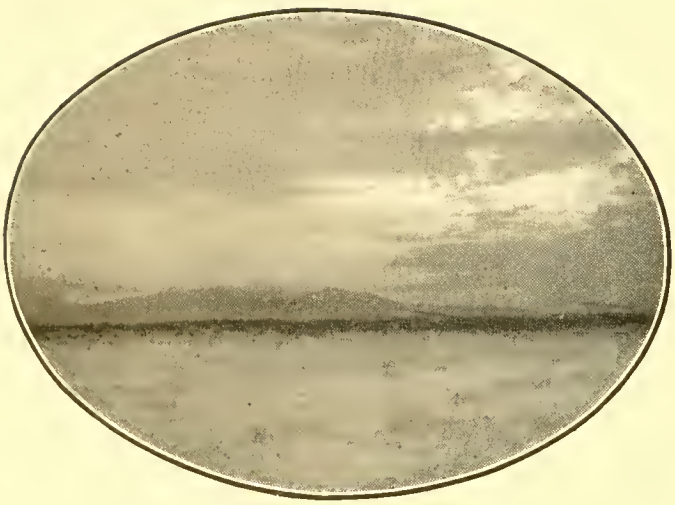
A spot I clear'd for my tepee,
As only a lover could.
My people came and smiled at me,
For they well understood.

When morn began, away I fled
On past my sleeping friends.
My horse I rode, another led,
To where the roadway ends.

The night came on—I wait in vain,
To friends I would return;
But now they all would smile again—
This time the smiles would burn.

An arrow to her land I sent—
No bird came flying by.
Then, to the distant hills I went
To roam—perhaps, to die.

There found a hut some paleface made
(It had its story, too),
And liv'd the life as he it laid,
'Mongst flowers that he grew.



Five moons went by, and only saw
Some rabbits, birds, and deer.
One day, to break this mountain law,
Two squaws came wandering near.

I sent an arrow, just to warn
Them off to other land.
To my surprise, it was my Fawn,
Led by her mother's hand.

I stepp'd, then, from my cabin door,
To greet as friends instead.
"Go to his heart, and grieve no more,"
Was all her mother said.

And then she turned, to go her way,
Now, back to face her Chief.
We begged in vain for her to stay—
Her life would there be brief.

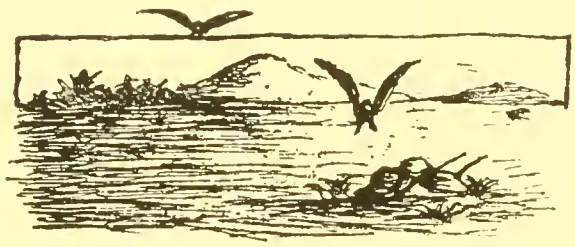
Fawn said my parting arrow found
Its way to other hands;
Their Chief told them to leave the ground
And go to other lands.

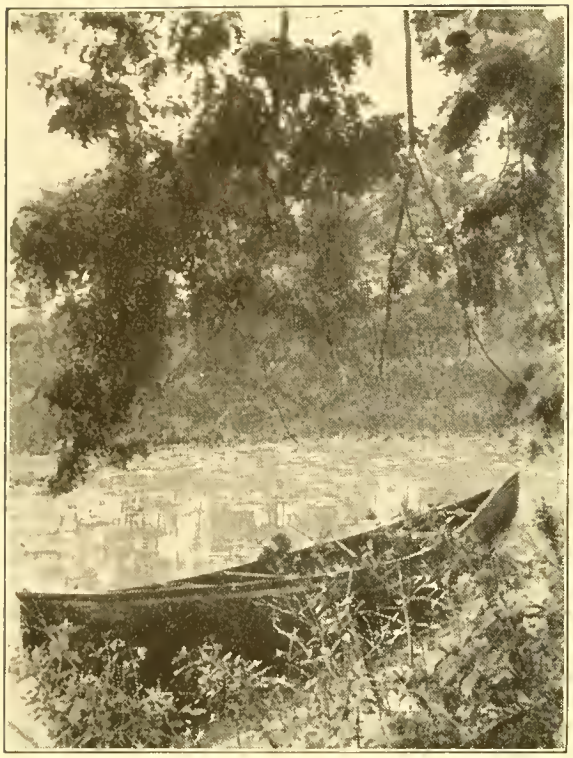
Then me they sought, to give the love
That I thought had been lost.
Each day I prayed to God above
For one that paid the cost.

On our return, now hand in hand,
With thoughts as they should be,
We had to cross her people's land
To get to our tepee.

We halted at a new made grave
All covered o'er with stone,
And thought it was a 'parted brave,
For reasons, left alone.

Then Fawn look'd down, but did not speak,
At a basket made of wood.
I saw a tear roll down her cheek—
And then I understood.





LAMENTATIONS OF AN INDIAN.

Gone forever are the council fires
That lit the land of my brave sires,
And, when the hills we went to roam,
Their light led us back to our home.

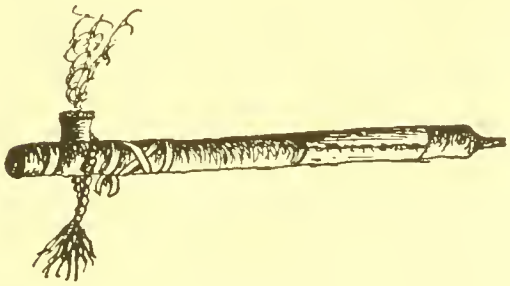
And gone the spirit of our race.
As once we were, there is no trace.
A Nation, soon, we will have passed,
When the Great Spirit calls our last.

We were the children of the earth,
But we have signed away our birth,
With promise to protect our young,
But forgotten when it left the tongue.

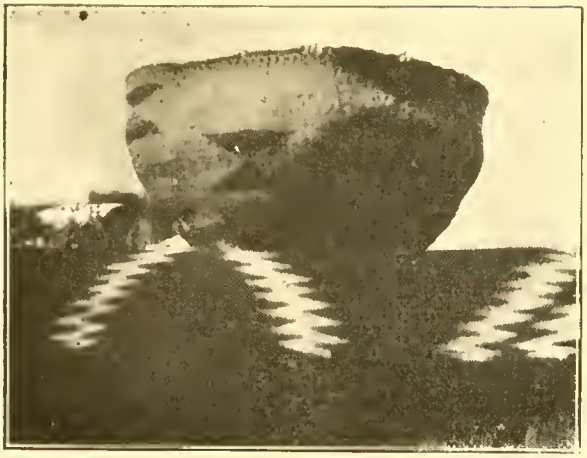
Now our last resting place is gone;
The hunting ground is laid in corn.
Our 'parted braves and honored dead—
On o'er their graves the plow is led.

And, when the Buffalo* crossed the lake,
Our home, our clothes, and food did take,
I laid aside my Indian mind—
My home and clothes are of your kind.

I live my days, now, in the thought
Of what the past to me has taught.
I smoke my pipe of peace to all,
And wait for the Great Spirit's call.



**When the Buffalo disappeared, the Indian imagined they crossed over a great lake.*



THE STORY OF THE OLD BASKET.

No sell him basket—me want keep,
And take him when me die;
Want look when every night go sleep,
For sometimes me make cry.

When me, no big, was only small,
And father, him was Chief;
Our people have big fight with all—
For other people thief.

We make them many that they die,
When three man come to see
If we no more will fight, and try
To smoke peace pipe with he.

One him come sick—a bear too quick.
To him my father say:
"Our people make him no more sick,
Then him can go away."

For him make basket, for me love
Make all the day he saw.
Me watch by him till stars above—
He say he want me squaw.

The others go away, now soon,
And glad we no make fight.
That's why him basket have new moon,
For, when they come, it night.

When he was no more sick, him go;
Me say me want come, too.
My people say it must be no;
Me say, some day me do.

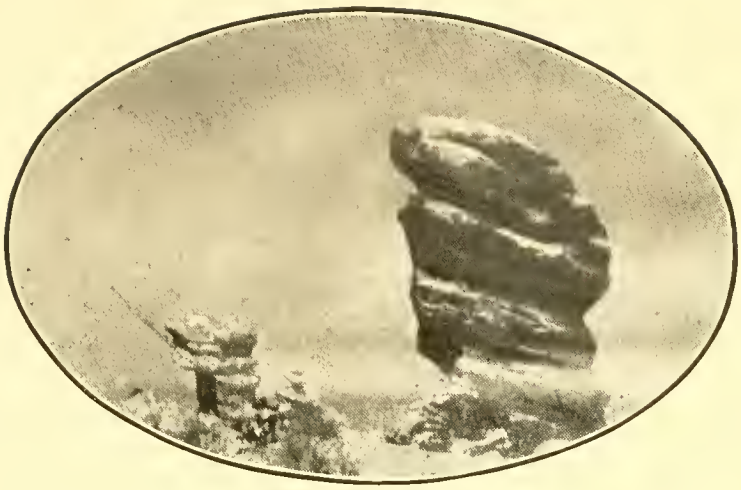
Him basket with small flower take.
The moon is now big rim.
Then tears me, now, in shower make,
For love me have for him.

Long time me want no any eat;
My people he all laugh,
And say: "Me will again one meet
To love, when moon is half."

Bad spirit come, make many die;
My father is no more.
Then paleface come, and many try
Our people to make war.

And take our people all away
Where sun him go 'way down.
For we no more come back, he say;
We want make here big town.

We no want go, we want stay here,
But paleface have big law.
Our people all have many tear,
But now can't make them war.



First leaf he come, and me go ride—
To other people talk.
All have much corn, and there inside
On blankets he all walk.

One man alone he no have squaw—
Nobody care for him.
On table there old basket saw,
New moon it have on him.

"Me go away," me to him say—
No want that him should know;
But cry for him now all the day,
For me do love him so.

Not long, again, me come to speak—
Me want that him should see.
But, no, him mind is now too weak;
Always him want be free.

That basket make, me to him tell.
He look, and want know where.
Me say he sick, and me make well,
When in our land back there.

He cry, so glad no can tell how;
No want me go away,
And say his people mine are, now;
He wait for me long day.

Long time me now so happy be,
When him come sick, and die.
Me old, just like him basket; see,
My face, like flower, dry.

Now paleface want buy for two bit
The one me no want sell,
And other basket, no want it—
But why, me no can't tell.

THE INDIAN'S CALL OF THE PAST.

Come! Let us find our home as once it was,
Just as our Fathers taught us it must be.
As Nature gave it, so let us have it,
And go, then, to our graves, with spirit free.

SEGWUN.

(*Spring.*)

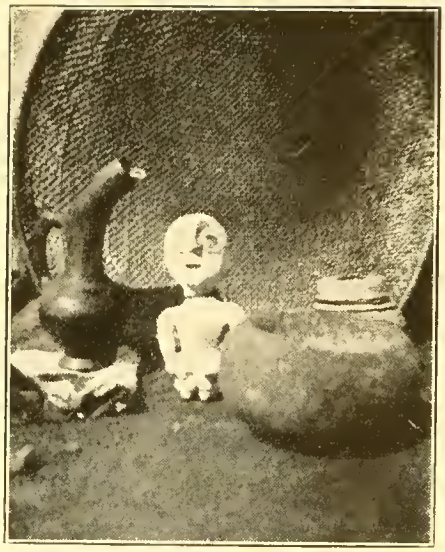
From the cradle to the grave.

Great Bear, a sentry to the wild,
  Stood guard at his own door.
His squaw was chanting to the child
  That she, that morning, bore.

The evil dare not pass by him
  To mark his child in birth,
For a brave must be all sound of limb
  To make his way on earth.

For this new-born may be their Chief,
  And will be named Segwun* :
The coming of the first green leaf
  Told him Spring had begun.

**Segwun was born the first day of Spring, and was named after the incident, as is their custom.*



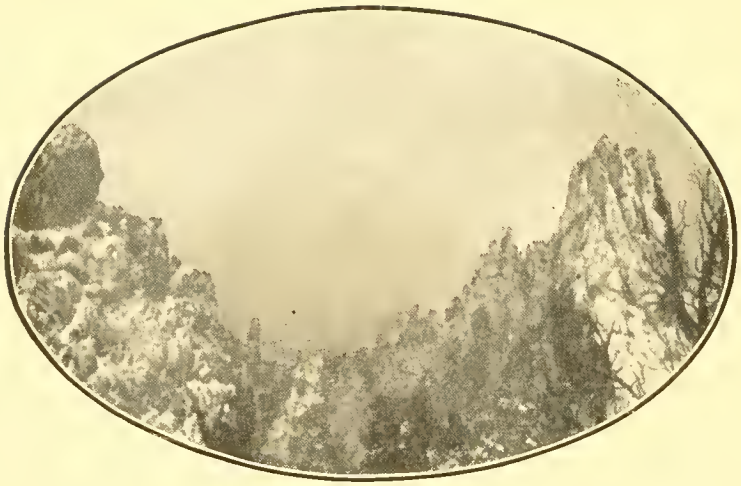
From reeds, a cradle soon was made,
Still wet with morning dew,
And there in it Segwun was laid
To swing when breezes blew.

When old enough to understand,
Their legends then were told,
And 'bout the far-off paleface land
Where all love land and gold.

To the nearby land he had to go,
And roam the forest there,
To try his nerve; so with his bow
He went, with courage rare.

When this Young hunter went to slay
The first life he could find,
There, in the sun, wild turkey lay,
With death not in their mind.

To get quite close, he held his breath,
Then shot an arrow fast;
A bird then flapped its wings in death,
The heart to beat its last.



With bird, for home he would depart,
To show that he was brave,
And was not born, with woman's heart,*
To share a coward's grave.

He lost his way to his tepee,
And then began to weep,
But soon laid down beneath a tree,
With bird in hand, to sleep.

When he awoke at early morn,
The bird still in his hand,
O'er hills he saw the crimson dawn
That came from paleface land.

In dread, he started then to run,
And hid behind a pine.
He did not know it was the Sun
That lit up earth's outline.

**An Indian with a woman's heart is one who lacks courage.*

His home to find, he hurried now,
To warn them if he could.
For the rising day-moon* told him how
He had misunderstood.

The path, at last, he there did find
That led to his tepee;
The bird was dragging on behind,
So tired and weak was he.

The mother ran to greet her son,
His father only smiled,
Which told the boy that he had won
The right to be his child.

Now, other lands, he craved to see,
Where the day-moon goes to stay
Before it comes their way, to be
The maker of the day.

**Day-moon means the Sun.*

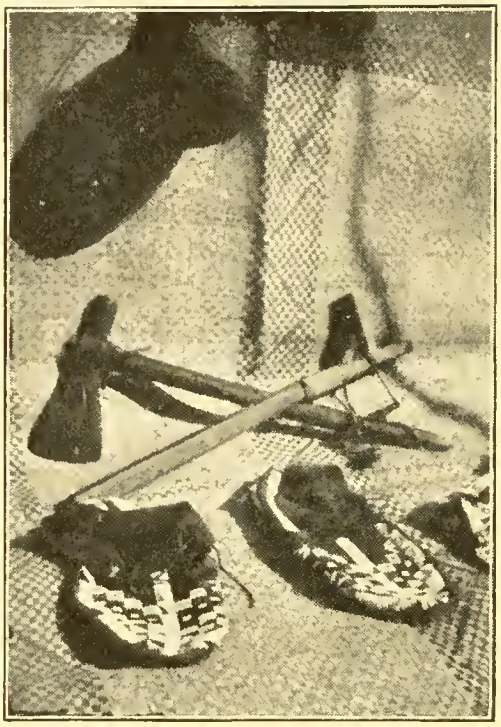
He also would see paleface land,
Its mysteries to know,
And learn there how, by white man's hand,
So many things can grow.

He soon saw how the paleface live,
And the strange things they do.
Soon, to his people he will give
The things they never knew.

Then, with their books, he sat, to plan
Their wisdom for to learn;
And, for the clothes of paleface man,
His blanket he would spurn.

A white man he had made his friend,
Who said that to this earth
The Indian true did Nature send
To show the world its worth.

This made him long for home again
His people, now, to see.
Among the hills he would remain,
There in the land so free.



Before another moon, he sighed
At his tepee, and thought
His father had, with others, died
In battle that they fought.

For peace, a warrior he will be;
Then 'way his arrow laid,
To teach his people, now, to see
That hate their sorrow made.

In peace, as brothers they could roam;
As couriers, arrows send.
Then they need not stand guard at home,
But bid them, "Enter, friend!"

Then to the wise he did appeal,
Who sat in council there,
And told how paleface sometimes deal
With those who prove unfair.

They would make him a trusted friend,
Just to sell him a horse.
In Peace all would gain, in the end,
What might have been a loss.

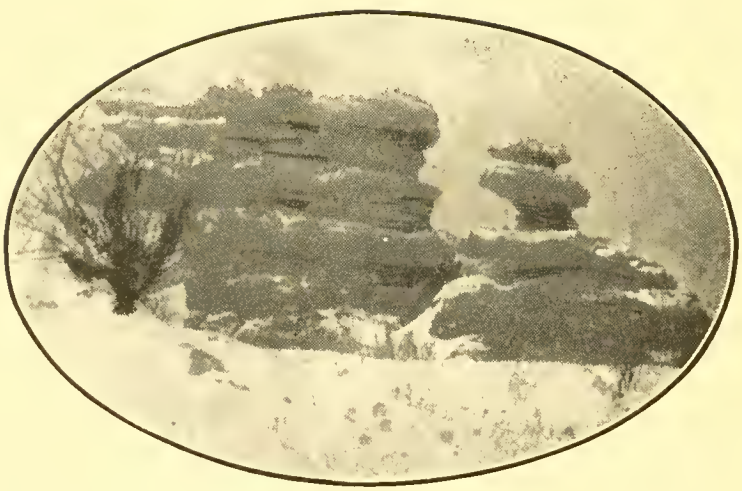
One of the wise men to him said:
"Your wisdom fits your clothes,
But not until we all are dead
Will end the Indians' woes."

Segwun stood silent, in deep thought,
Then quietly walked away;
But soon returned, and with him brought
A blanket, to display.

They knew his father that one bore,
When he to council came.
Segwun removed the clothes he wore,
To show he was the same.

These clothes, before their eyes, he burned,
To join again their fold—
For he, as Indian, had returned
To live his life of old.

Then lit his pipe, to pass along,
To wish them peace and joy,
And sang to them his father's song
That was taught him when a boy.



His blanket wrapped all round him,
The fire now burning low.
The day was breaking, when his slim,
Straight form was seen to go.

Along the river bank he went
To watch the day-moon rise,
That the Great Manito had sent
Out of the distant skies.

In smiles he went to his tepee,
Although with heart of lead.
His mother waiting there, to see
Her son safe to his bed.

To greet him now, the wise men came.
They would make him their Chief,
But only could respect his name—
They saw this, to their grief.

For there he lay, content at last;
Peace came with final breath.
The Autumn leaves now falling fast,
Segwun lay still in death.

THE ARROW.

As a Courier.

My messenger in days gone by,
The truth it always bore;
And never did it carry a lie—
With me it was the law.

As a Procurer.

When, on a hunt, it found the mark
I sent it forth to find;
And never did it pierce the bark,
With my arm on behind.

As a Weapon.

In war, each arrow went to tell
A warrior now takes part.
With every shot there came a yell—
I knew I had his heart.

As a Relic.

Now it is passing, with our race,
To be forgot, some day.
A relic, now, it found a place
There in the dust to lay.

SAME GOD THE INDIAN SENDS.

"Good Indian is when Indian dead!"
Some paleface speak one day.
But no tell when he is some good—
It's left for us to say.

Long 'go, me walk where mountain big;
Go follow trail for deer.
Me have no water, now—me sick;
But walk—no want die here.

Me see Joe's hut (him dig for gold);
Some water me will get.
There Joe him sit, make smoke his pipe,
No see him long time yet.

That sick, me tell want water drink;
My tongue much dry is, now.
Him say, "For Indian, me no got—
Me have, must give to cow."

Me go; like dog me crawl to squaw.
  Him give me some, when sick;
But no tell him what Joe he say—
  Him temper is too quick.

Our people die, me live alone;
  Small hut me make from tree,
Where many times some people come.
  Him say, "Hut good to see."

When Winter come, big snow he fall—
  No care, have meat inside.
Him squaw want have some nut from tree;
  Then me with horse go ride.

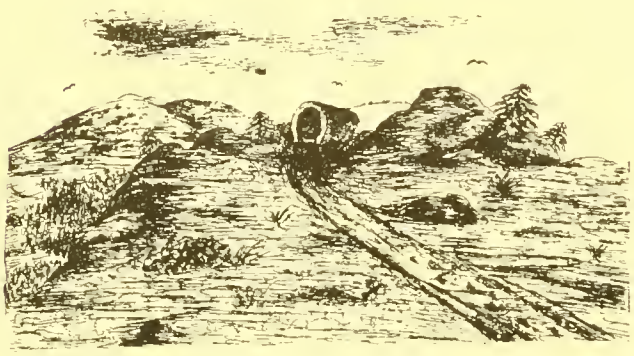
Me sing to moon, who now is big.
  When me come back, it night.
He squaw tell me white man him come—
  No find his way all right.

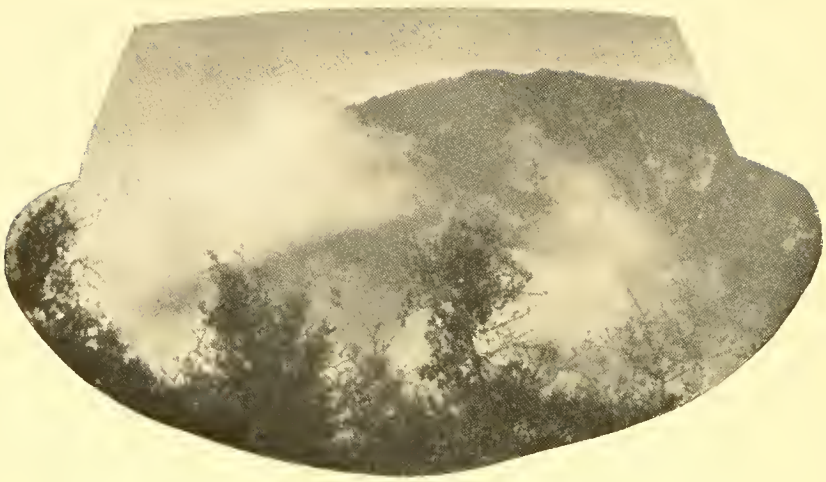
Me go to look—him Joe me see;
  To Indian, him no fair.
Me speak no word—let sleep all night.
  Him think me don't live there.

Tell squaw, in morning, him give meat.
  Him eat—me wait outside.
From spring me get some water, too;
  Me bring to him inside.

When me come in the door, him look,
  But no take drink from pail.
He now speak good: "Will give eat, too,
  When Indian lose his trail."

Me tell to him: "Give, hungry men
  In mountains must be friends.
Our blood is red, the same like you;
  Same God the Indian sends."



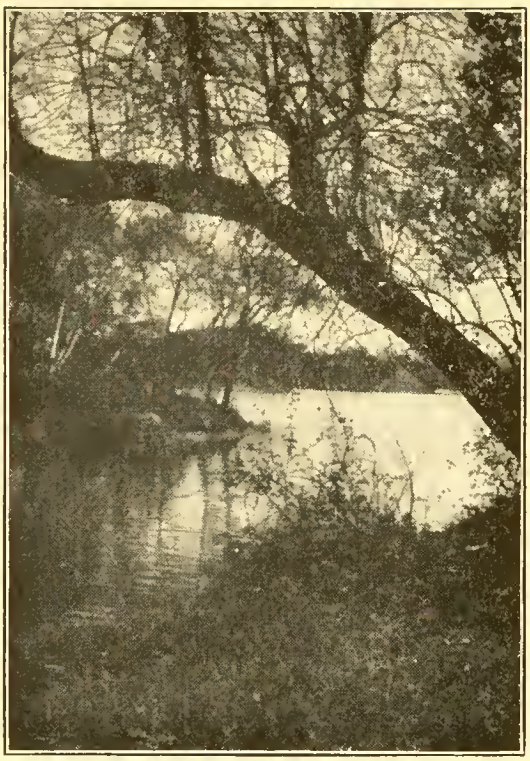


THE HILL OF THE DEAD.

The hill of the dead now stands, to tell
Of the spot where once a thousand fell.
This hill was made by friend and foe;
Of earth, each passerby would throw.

Outagamie, a forgotten name,
As Chief he fell, to rule the same.
"He's not all dead," our people cried.
"His soul commands, and will us guide."

Now, of my tribe, I am the last.
To honor those who long have passed,
The earth, from my own grave, to-day,
I scatter where my people lay.



"WHY AM I CALLED A SAVAGE?"

Is it because I sit for hours listening to the singing brook; because I am happier in the forest, with its fragrant pines, its silence, than I am in the city of the pale-face, with its tall tepees, bad smells, and big noises; that I do not rob my brother, that I might have more than I can use; that, in his absence, I do not steal into his wigwam and make love to his squaw? I try to live as you do, and die.

I will be guided by my Mother as I know her! The Earth is mother to me—the sun, her smiles; the rain, her tears, and, in your selfishness and greed, you strip her bare, tear open her bosom, drain her milk, dig up her bones, and leave her barren for the papooses to come. And you call this civilization?

Ugh! I will remain a savage!

Thank You.

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